The Angle Of Repose

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The Angle Of Repose

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Summary

A Season 1 Remix by thirteen authors from five countries across eight time zones.

For Hannibal Cre-ate-ive #ForBothOfUs 2018

Aperitif by Electra Rhodes

He dipped his hands down into his underwear and shucked off his whites. Stepped into the shower, and then winced as the not-yet-warm water splashed across him. Shit. Cold. He shivered and crowded himself into the corner to avoid the sputter and stream of the motel plumbing.

As it warmed he let himself unwind a little, gradually widened his stance and then rested his forehead against the cracked tiling. He closed his eyes for a time and let the water be a comfort. When he opened them he could see pink froth at the drain and rivulets of watered down blood cascading down his thighs. He shuddered again. Not from the cold this time.

He reached for the thin shaving of soap he'd half used up earlier in the morning. God. Was it only this morning? As he fought for any kind of lather he let out a long breath. Yeah. Ok. Damn.

The water in the drain still ran pink as he washed his face and neck. Who'd have thought she had so much blood in her? That shirt was probably never going to be wearable again. Maybe he could salvage the pants. Or relegate them to use only when fishing, or working on boat motors, or washing up with the dogs. The thought of all that happy pawing pant and whine brought a short smile to his face. Yeah. Winston. Not a total loss of a week then.

His survey of his own particular brand of found family brought him up short for a moment. She was ok. Sharp. Smart. Maybe they'd get on enough. At least she might make it tolerable in the lab. Katz and dogs he thought. Yeah. Even he could see the elusive sharp stab of humour in that.

He noticed a slight break in the temperature and flow. Better get on with it. He washed more carefully. Under his armpits. It had been a sour kind of day. Not just with the girl. Her dad. Her mom. Across and down his ribs. His chest. Along the tender skin of his sides. Yeah. That woman and the work logs, all that paperwork and a lucky kind of leap. He ran his hands down his legs, balanced on one foot as he caught up his calves and ankles. Blood could find its way into every nook and cranny. He wondered briefly if he'd flare bright under a UV lamp. Spray him with luminol and watch him light up like a bonfire.

He reached for the soap again and got to work around the trail of hair down to his groin. Yeah. And Dr. Lecter. That breakfast. And the sort of apology that wasn't. Or the other way around. One of those. He washed behind his balls, felt the shift and swing there as he shadowed his hand between them. Then his cock. He paid attention to the underside, watched for the catch of skin. Yeah. The doctor. With his floppy bangs and good lips. And his hands.

He gave himself a sharp tug. And then again. Yeah. Ok. So he'd been quick to get it out of his mouth but certainly some of him found that performance more than a little entertaining. Engaging. Yeah. Ok. Fuck it. Interesting. It was neat. He'd give that to the man. A nice little cut and thrust. He tugged a little harder, got the soap working with him not against him. Yeah. Good. Really good.

He rested his head back against the tiling and let his thoughts glide with his hands, one of them cupping his balls, working there, the other gripping a little tighter. Sharp twist at the end, over the crown and then back again. Repeat. The water sprayed a little more erratically keeping time with his breathing. An echo. An acapella of water and skin and. His hands. His mouth. What he'd do with that mouth. To it.

He jerked into the spray and breathed harder. The water washed his ejaculate away along with everything else. Good sense included. He snorted a little. Maybe jerking off to thoughts of your psychiatrist wasn't the best start. Or maybe it was. The guy had certainly been angling for something. That little smirk in the car. Bringing the breakfast in the first place. His prodding in Jack's office. That goddam thing about a mongoose. Yeah. Something.

He switched off the water and pulled open the shower, shivered again through the change of temperature and groped for a towel. Once he was dressed and half way back to human he remembered the stag. His head gave a faint throb. The other stag. The performance. Field kabuki. Catching at him and how his mind jumped to Dr. Lecter with barely a pause.

He sat on the bed and tied the laces on his shoes and then straightened up. As he left the motel room he pulled on his jacket. In the car he bundled up the sheeting the SOC guys had given him to cover the seat, stuffed it into the trunk, tried to forget about it.

At the hospital the receptionist pointed him to the elevators and told him which floor to head for. There was a guard on the door, but a quick flash of a badge got him past that Cerberus. And inside. The girl. Asleep. Unconscious maybe. Recovering. A bank of machines charting the thin thread of her life.

And Dr. Lecter seated beside her. His face softened in repose. His hair still flopped across his forehead. His goddam pout of a mouth. Blood on his sleeve, just visible where he clasped the girl's hand resting on the bed. He settled into the chair on the other side. Took a deep breath. Looked at the girl. Looked at the doctor again. Felt it all come together in his mind. Just slot into place. Just like that. Felt a stir in his groin.

Yeah. Ok. Well, the good doctor had been right on multiple counts.

Fuck.

Amuse-Bouche by LoveHonorCookie

Chapter by LoveHonorCookie

Knowing what he THINKS he knows about Hannibal, Will finds it prudent to put as much distance as possible between himself and the handsome doctor.

The offices of Dr. Hannibal Lecter are interesting, elegant, and tasteful- full of masterful art, gorgeous furniture, and a truly impressive amount of books located on an upper level, accessible by ladder. Which, to Hannibal's seeming amusement, Will beelines for in the name of safety.

Will pretends to be engrossed in the bookcase in front of him- only when he feels ready does he turn his full attention to the doctor.

Hannibal's lips quirk as though they are sharing a private joke, and he gently fingers a document with his strong, graceful hands.

"What's that?" Will asks in surprise.

"Your Psychological Evaluation. You're totally functional and more or less sane. Well done." Hannibal's smiled widens as he explains, and then he set the papers down.

"Did you just rubberstamp me?" Will says with more bite than he means.

Hannibal is positively gleeful now. "Jack Crawford may lay his weary head to rest knowing he didn't break you and our conversation can proceed unobstructed by paperwork."

The mention of Jack's name brings Will back down to earth. "Jack thinks I need therapy."

Hannibal's grin drops. "What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there."

The simplicity of that strikes Will. Looking at the good doctor's face Will is hit with another flash of a pendulum swing. He sees Hannibal in the darkness, cool-headed and cold-blooded and beautifully inhuman.

Out loud he says, "Last time he sent me into a dark place I brought something back."

"A surrogate daughter?" is the question the doctor poses, and continues, "You saved Abigail Hobbs' life. You also orphaned her. It comes with certain emotional obligations, regardless of empathy disorders."

Will is unused to his level of perception being pointed back at him. He makes him both angry and, strangely, horny. "You were there. You saved her life, too. Do you feel obligated?"

Hannibal's gaze on his is steadfast and sincere. "I feel a staggering amount of obligation. I feel responsibility. I've fantasized about it scenarios where my actions may have allowed a

different fate for Abigail Hobbs."

A different pendulum swing comes over Will, and he feels he can see himself somewhere in the strange depths of Hannibal Lecter. Which leads him to confess,

"Jack thinks Abigail Hobbs might've helped her dad kill those girls."

A long silence, then with a hint of an ironic smile, Hannibal queries, "How does that make you feel?"

"How does it make *you* feel?" Will retorts in annoyance.

Hannibal's lip curls in distaste. "I find it vulgar." A long pause. "And entirely possible."

Will cannot let himself see. "It's not what happened."

Hannibal pushes forward. "Jack will ask her when she wakes up or he'll have one of us ask her."

Will snorts. "Is this therapy or a support group?"

"It's whatever you need it to be." Will locks his full gaze on Hannibal. "Will, the mirrors in your mind can reflect the best of yourself and not the worst of someone else."

Another pendulum swing. Will knows deep down that this man is dangerous. Suddenly overcome by that grim certainty, Will knows he has to get away.

"Well, I think we've covered all the bases for today, so if you don't mind I need to get back to the Academy." He can see Hannibal glide to meet him at the ladder, as Will scrambles down. In his panic, he misses a step-

And lands squarely in the arms of Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Will swallows hard when for a moment, he is pressed firmly against Hannibal's body. He finds himself caught in a gaze that is both warm and hot at the same time. Remembering his actions in the shower the other day, he blushes, and feels himself begin to harden against the doctor's thigh.

"Don't worry, Will. I've got you."

Yes, that's very much what Will is afraid of.

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Will is even more afraid later, after he has confessed to Hannibal that he liked killing Garret Jacob Hobbs.

They are sitting across from each other, staring intently, as Hannibal's words depicting a capricious God ring in Will's ears. Hannibal's eyes are utterly unfathomable as he reaches across the distance between them to take Will's hand.

Will finds he cannot breathe as the doctor begins speaking again. "Will, I don't mean to be forward, but I feel a connection between the two of us." Will can only feel himself nodding helplessly. "And I want there to be openness between us. I want you to know that you can tell me anything, come to me with anything… and I hope one day to be able to come to you, as well."

The pendulum begins in Will's mind again, he stands before it can complete it's revelation in his mind.

"NO!" Will shouts, leaning back.

Hannibal leans back, looking abashed. "I apologize, Will- I have overstepped my bounds. You are correct-"

"No!" Will interrupts again, leaning forward again. "I just… that's not what I meant." Will can't make out WHAT he means, so he babbles instead. "I want… I want us to be open. Just maybe not… here, and now." With every word he fights against what his mind wants to show him.

On impulse, his hands shoot out to grab Hannibal's. He remembers how the Doctor had gone soft and warm when he held Will before. He does so again.

Will's mind goes blissfully blank as the pendulum stops. He hears himself speaking as if from a distance.

"I want to be… open." He licks his lips. Watches Hannibal watching him lick his lips. "I just want to go slow. And to… not do it here."

He feels Hannibal's thumb stroke his wrist. Slowly.

"Of course," Hannibal murmurs, looking soft and warm and devoid of the sharp edges Will is certain are there.

God, Will is in so much trouble.

Potage by HarkerX

Chapter by HarkerX

Chapter Summary

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What Will remembers is the way Hannibal held Abigail's hand as they slept. Lightly. Lifeline. His breath and her breath. The soft of his body, the way it slumped in the chair, his coat over his lap like a blanket.

What he remembers is blood. In his hair. On his hands. Smearing his glasses. He remembers water and blood, the easy circle of it down the drain. His own spend. Hannibal's face, the shape of him, a dark memory in a dim kitchen.

Today the light is luminous, pale hospital spring green and there's a plant in the corner that Hannibal seems fascinated by. Living. Breathing.

Will's fingers twitch as he steps into the garden. Ferns and red flowers. The glass above their heads littered with orange, autumn leaves. They walk in alignment, like superheroes, each of them and their secrets and Hannibal. Hannibal smells of oncoming winter, sharp and deep, like a cave perfect for hibernation. And Will. It would be so easy to hide, to run away with Hannibal Lecter.

Get it together, Graham.

Abigail turns her head. Hannibal's talking but it's faraway. Then it's closer. Vowels form words, they taste like rocks, the dirt that holds the plants in this garden together.

"I'm sorry," Will finally says. "I'm sorry we couldn't save your mother."

Abigail looks at him with eyes too big for the pale of her face. Her hair a veil, dark and straight and the scarf she wears is a bow, holding the package together. "I saw him kill her. He was loving, right up until the second he wasn't." She pauses. "Do you have nightmares about killing my dad?"

Will's hand becomes a fist. He taps away anger, presses a knuckle into the meat of his thigh. "Sometimes it's hard for me to dream about much else."

Hannibal glances at him, then back at Abigail.

Jesus.

“We dream of what we have done as a way to come to terms with the decisions this life has forced us to make. The decisions we have yet to make…you don’t have to be alone, Abigail.”

Abigail looks up. Hannibal smiles but he is not looking at her, but at Will.

“We can help you with your nightmares.”

We . Will blinks, stammers out words, a rush of syllables to drown out the offer he knows Hannibal is a moment away from making. “There was plenty wrong with your father, Abigail, but there’s nothing wrong with you. You said he was loving. I believe it. That’s what you brought out in him.”

The girl’s face betrays her disbelief. “It’s not all I brought out in him.”

Hannibal stops. Touches a verdant leaf. “What hurt your family most was not the actions, but the secrets of your father. How kind it would have been if he had only told you, been honest. Abigail,” he pauses and looks at Will. “Between us, there should be no secrets--”

I want us to be open.

Panic. Heat rushes up Will’s neck. He steps in close. Closer to Hannibal. Touches the man’s waist. A secondary warmth fills his chest. Hannibal leans ever so slightly to his right. Will breathes slowly, clears his throat.

Abigail turns away from them, studying the greenery. She reaches behind a fern, lifts up a small potted plant, leaves floppy and pale. “It’s a mandrake.”

Hannibal’s opens his palm. Abigail rests the pot in the steady of his hand. Oval leaves open in a rosette, layered over and over each other.

“Bryonia Alba .” Hannibal tilts his head, eyes crinkling, the barest smile on his lips. “The roots, the mandrake, resemble human figures. Poisonous, hallucinogenic.”

“The mandrake’s cry is fatal to anyone who hears it.” It’s all Will can offer; the minute the words leave his mouth he wants to reel them back in. “That’s from Harry Potter.”

Abigail touches the scarf at her neck.

But Hannibal. It’s Hannibal who saves him.

“And perhaps the ghost of Garrett Jacob Hobbs is He who shall not be named,” Hannibal says, straightening his coat, ensuring it falls smoothly over his forearm. “We’ll need magic to defeat him. Tell me, then, what is your Patronus?”

How would Hannibal know to ask that? Will tries to picture Hannibal under a home-knit afghan, a mug of tea in his hand. A soft, cabled sweater. Bunny slippers. Will beside him. Same blanket, his feet tucked under the man's thighs to keep his toes warm. Will fiddles with

a button on his coat and folds his hands over his chest as if that's enough to hide what he's feeling.

He is in so much trouble.

"I'd rather know yours," Abigail says, instead.

"A stag," Will interrupts, reaches back, leaves flutter over his hands, sharp points dig into skin as he slides his fingers into damp dirt. "A raven."

The sun shifts. Shadows float through the enclosure. Abigail is quiet. She tucks her hands in her pockets.

"And a river otter," Will whispers.

Abigail looks at her shoes and then up at Hannibal as if he has the answer to the next question, whatever it might be. Turns out he does.

"River otters prey on the most readily acceptable species."

Will's throat closes. He pulls free of the foliage and wipes his hands on his jeans. "Hannibal--"

The man drags careful fingers over the line of Will's jaw. "We all need to eat."

And just then, Will realizes he is hungry.

Oeuf by OneHandedBooks

Chapter by OneHandedBooks

It is 7:29 pm and Will is outside Hannibal's office door again. He already knows that Hannibal is waiting for him, just on the other side, like he already knows all sorts of things he'd rather not, and he is seized by desperate competing desires to see him and not to see him. The curve of his lips. The strength of his hands. The guilt, all bloody at the bone. Knowing what Hannibal is and saying nothing. Already carrying in his heart the promise of death that will bloom from the soil of this secret.

It's worse tonight, Will admits, because of the terrible anger he's carrying alongside his conflict. Anger that he's picked up from Jack. That he feels for the waste of those lost boys. Their families, fragile as tissue paper, destroyed by well-placed whispers their sons were helpless against- you are loved above all, you are special, you belong. It's molten in his throat, like slag aluminum, like pig iron, and he wants to bring it to Hannibal because he knows Hannibal will hold it for him awhile. Would be glad to hold it for him.

Too glad; he feeds off it. He's the Ri… No. Stop.

Hannibal opens the door to him with a crushing little look of fondness and Will *sees* the truth of him as he always has. The dark deeds done, yes, but now the confession he so longs to offer as well. The gift of it, poised like a pearl on the point of his tongue. "I hope one day to be able to come to you," Hannibal had said. "We should have no secrets."

Hannibal ushers him in and Will stalks past him, stiff-legged, struggling to hold on to just the anger, to burn clean.

"Will," Hannibal begins. "You said you wanted us to be open… "

But it isn't time for this, it can't *ever* be time for this. Will slings his messenger bag at the chaise and it bounces off the tufted surface in a calculated miss, hitting the floor and flipping open. A bundle of half-chewed pens and sheaf of papers to be graded spill out of the top. An ivory-wrapped and ribboned present in the back pocket skitters off across the hardwood.

Will's momentum carries him forward, feet catching the edge of the canvas bag and tangling in the shoulder strap. He stumbles extravagantly, arms thrown wide, then hits the floor himself in a very uncalculated heap. His hands burn against the wood as he breaks the fall. The sharp click of his teeth against his tongue drawing blood.

"Will!"

Hannibal hurries to him and stoops to help him up.

Hannibal's surprise apparently eclipses whatever catastrophic revelation he'd been about to make and Will is deeply grateful for that. For a moment. Until he realizes he's miscalculated. Because now there's this. Hannibal's hands on him. Firm and steady. Lifting him carefully

and ushering him to the chair he's already come to think of as *his.* The heat of Hannibal's body soaking through his jacket, warming the sensitive skin beneath his arm, across his ribs.

Hannibal crouches on the floor at Will's side, face broadcasting concern. "You landed quite hard, Will. Show me your hands."

Will can't bring himself to resist. He holds his hands out and Hannibal takes them gently, curving long fingers around his wrists.

"You've abraded your palms," Hannibal says softly. "Let me help you."

They are looking down into the cup of his hands together and then Hannibal is reaching into his suit jacket for his pocket handkerchief, as if to bind this nothing wound. The pendulum swings before Will can stop it. He sees the surgical know-how. Sees the tiny cut on his palm open wider in a thick red line, chasing the gleaming slice of a scalpel. The amputated tongue used as a page-marker in a dog-eared Bible. The rivulet of blood running in a ditch of broken pages.

A Baltimore sounder of three- the iron bar through one man's hand.

Will sucks in a breath and looks quickly away, dodging Hannibal's avid, searching gaze. Afraid Hannibal will see the knowledge he already has, and does not want, rising in his eyes like a flood.

Of course Hannibal's still there when he can bring himself to glance back. Right there. On the floor at his feet. On his knees. His mouth soft and parted. Will wants to cup Hannibal's face in his bloodied palm and bring their mouths together. He wants to do that.

He imagines Hannibal in the shower with him again, reddish water cascading off his body and down the steel drain. Hannibal catching him against the library ladder and stroking his thumb over his wrist. Hannibal's shoulder warm against his in the conservatory. Hannibal's hands around Abigail's throat. Her blood a barrier, not meant to be crossed.

See too much - a warning. *Don't see enough* - an order he gives himself.

"I'm fine," Will snaps, drawing his hands back.

Hannibal gives him a flat-ish, faintly disapproving look and stands up. He brushes imaginary dirt off his pants and shakes out the creases.

"You might rinse your hands at least," he suggests with exceptional calm. "There's a washroom in the foyer."

By the time Will returns, hands damp and cold, face flushed with embarrassment, Hannibal is already sitting in his usual spot. Legs crossed, face serenely interested. Hand resting on the gift-wrapped package that had spilled from Will's bag. Will eyes it, and Hannibal, warily.

Hannibal glides his fingertips back and forth across the satiny wrapping paper. "Has Christmas come early? Or late?"

Will snorts and paces to Hannibal's desk. He picks up a paperweight. Fondles a letter opener. Shows Hannibal his back. He can feel Hannibal's eyes on his body like a weight.

"It was for Abigail," he admits finally, turning to sit on the edge of the desk.

"Was?" Hannibal asks, surprised. He looks closer at the package balanced on his knee, but it reveals nothing of itself. "What is it?"

Will's mouth thins and he sighs through his nose. "Magnifying glass. Fly-tying gear."

"Teaching her to fish." Hannibal wets his lips. "Her father taught her how to hunt."

"I know," Will says tightly. "Inappropriate. That's why I thought better of it . "

Hannibal sets the package on the side table and leans encouragingly in Will's direction. "Tell me, Will, why are you so angry?"

Will shoves himself abruptly off the desk and sits down heavily in the chair opposite Hannibal. He leans forward, elbows on his thighs, and Hannibal follows. Mirroring.

"I'm angry about those boys," Will says. "I'm angry because I know when I find them, I can't help them. I can't give them back what they just gave away!"

"Family."

Will shakes his head and rubs a hand across his mouth. He will draw no deliberate parallels here. "We call them the Lost Boys."

Hannibal clearly doesn't share his reticence. "Abigail's lost too. And perhaps it's our responsibility. Yours and mine. To help her find her way."

Will knows Hannibal is trying to forge a connection here. For his own purposes, no doubt. But knowing doesn't make him crave it any less. The devil offers everything, Will thinks. What's that, an echo? Something familiar he's heard or read.

Hannibal is still talking, still coaxing. Cozening. Something about them spending more time together. About how they might enjoy it if he cooked for them, having breakfast for dinner, and Will can see how it would be. A replacement for Abigail's last meal with her lost parents. A fairytale feast to bind him and Hannibal and their surrogate daughter. *Family.*

"She should stay in treatment," Will says without thinking. Stunned numb by the golden image. *The devil offers everything* .

"Spending each day immersed in tragedy may be doing Abigail more harm than good," Hannibal argues.

Will looks at him and sees Abigail, cool and wary as the river, trapped in a house of green and glass.

"You want to bring her home," he says. "Home with you."

Hannibal breathes deeply and flexes his hand as though to reach for Will and Will knows what he is going to say. He is going to say, “With us. Home with *us*,” but Will can’t. He just can’t. He holds his hand up, bruised palm out, before Hannibal can make him an offer he can’t refuse.

Coquilles by TigerPrawn

Chapter by TigerPrawn

For a moment. For just a fraction of a second, between breaths, before the lights ahead of him coalesced into what he had to presume was their real form, Will saw it.

I'm not sure if I'm awake now.

Feathers so black they could suck you in like an abyss. The click of it's hooves had been the only sound, resonating through his bones and making him feel sick with each step.

This spectre that haunted him, that he was still trying to fight *was* him - part of him. Part of the Shrike's copycat and its field kabuki. Part of Hobbs' antler room. Part of the catalyst that had woken him to himself.

What is it about that that makes Will want to seek out Hannibal after his unplanned wanderings?

Hobbs linked them together, Jacob Hobbs and now Abigail. Maybe it was just the thought of the blood and bone that brought Hannibal to mind?

Whatever it was, it wasn't scared or smart enough to keep him from showering, dressing and driving right over to Hannibal's house. Not even fully aware of the time until he got there.

Hannibal was sleepy, his hair soft and falling into his face. Will tried to ignore the all too intrusive thought that there was every chance he could see the man like that more, potentially every day, if he wanted to.

There had been something in Hannibal's gaze, a glint of something, when he told Will his kitchen was always open to friends. Nothing in his tone, which remained as inscrutable as ever. But his eyes - a flash there of something *more*. An indication, an offer, that Will *was* more.

But he pushed it no further, honouring the agreement they had made to take this, whatever it was, slowly. Even so, the concern over whether Jack was pushing too hard, too much, felt more than professional. It felt possessive. He could almost imagine Hannibal physically confronting the man in his… honour? Will felt a shiver go over him as they continued to converse.

The pendulum wanted to swing, it wanted to show him Hannibal, bloody and wild, slitting Jack's throat as his drive to protect and possess allowed him the upper hand with the man. Will resisted it. Seeing enough to know he wasn't ready to see more.

Not least because…

Will felt himself harden a little, surely not noticeably, but enough to tug at his own conscience. He didn't wish violence upon Jack Crawford. But he had to admit to himself that imagining - *knowing* - Hannibal would violently protect him when he was at his most vulnerable, stirred more than just his cock.

*

A handful of angels later, Will woke on his roof.

No stag this time, but just as haunting, as the barking of his dog's echoed around the remote property. Maybe it was the job getting to him, maybe he was as unstable as everyone believed.

It didn't occur to him to have any other immediate reaction than to go to Hannibal. Not call him, but be there, present with him. The first and only person he wanted to visit his troubles upon, regardless of office hours.

His therapist, his friend. *His*.

Will clenched his jaw for a moment and then chugged back the aspirin. He'd already lost count of how many he'd taken since waking. Not enough.

Just having conversations?

"I thought about zipping myself into a sleeping bag before I go to sleep," Will didn't stifle the bitter laugh, "but it sounds too much like a poor man's straight jacket." He couldn't help the image of Hannibal's arms around him instead. Keeping him in the bed as their bodies pressed together in sated sleep.

Will swallowed and focused his attention back to Hannibal.

Take it slow…

He knew there were so many reasons, not least the darkness within himself, the darkness of Hannibal, that made this all so untenable.

But he wanted it. For the first time he could ever really remember, Will Graham *wanted* something, someone, to the point of distraction. He had been determined, he had been hard working and driven, but he had never felt a desire like this before. It went beyond anything physical or emotional. A connection that was preternatural - metaphysical.

He's grateful when Hannibal moved them back to the case at hand, to the Angel Maker.

Will felt like he almost had everything - himself - back under control. Almost.

Hannibal moved behind him. He could feel him there, the looming presence that he was sure intimidated many but just served to make him tremble with need.

And then -

“Did you just smell me?” Will frowned, he was amused but baffled. It seemed like such a strange thing for someone like Hannibal to do, seemingly having not intended Will to notice.

Will couldn’t help but be amused by the ship on the bottle comment, and replied without thinking that he kept getting it for Christmas. It’s a lie, an automatic defense that he falls back on. Something he always has in his head if people question his clothes or appearance - or scent. He shops cheap, a poor child’s necessity supported into adulthood by a lack of reason or desire to change.

Once the lie was out of his mouth he looked down and felt his face drop. Hadn’t they agreed to be open with each other?

“I’d change the aftershave.” Hannibal advised.

Will had walked away, but he turned and caught Hannibal’s expression. Thoughtful but also… something else. Concern? Curiosity? Will wasn’t sure, he’d never before met someone so hard to read.

Wasn’t that part of the draw?

“Hannibal,” Will felt his pulse pick up when he turned to look at the man, “I… don’t get it for Christmas.”

Hannibal’s lips quirked into a slight smile and he tilted his head in question, like one of Will’s dogs might. “Are you asking if I *will* introduce you to a new one?”

The chuckle that bubbled up from Will’s chest was involuntary, “Maybe.” He couldn’t help but add, “You always smell good.”

How had they suddenly ended up so close to each other? They were several paces apart one moment and the next were in each other’s space and Will wasn’t sure which of them had moved. Maybe both of them? Maybe neither and the world had just contracted around them.

He needed this. Not because he was feeling less and less stable, not because he perhaps could use the support - someone to help lift his load. Which… hadn’t Hannibal already been doing that with their *conversations*?

No, Will needed this on a level he had never needed anything before. Need and want and Hannibal Lecter.

Take it slow.

Their lips pressed together and in that moment the noise in Will’s head stopped.

Entrée by inameitlater

Chapter by inameitlater

He tried, unsuccessfully, not to think about the kiss afterwards. Jack dragged him into the Abel Gideon investigation, but it failed as a distraction.

He remembered the tongue the Chesapeake Ripper had left in a bible as he sat in Dr. Chiltons office. The image mixed with the tongue Hannibal had pushed into his mouth. Will should have been disgusted, but he wasn't. They left for the cells.

"The mystery is whether you are who you say you are," Will told Abel Gideon. Inside, he was uninterested. Gideon wasn't the Ripper because… Will's mind shirked away from the thought and jumped back to being pressed against the door and kissed.

Take it slow, he had thought. Maybe he should have said it out loud instead. It hadn't been slow after the first hesitant touch.

Instead, he had broken it off, stuttered an apology and stumbled out of Hannibal's office, not letting the other man talk. He had nearly shattered a vase in the waiting room in his hurry to get out. His lips had burned as he ran.

Will pushed the memories beside and concentrated on his colleagues.

"I see the Ripper but I don't...feel the Ripper. He's an artist. This is... plagiarism," he told them in the morgue.

"We never made the wound patterns on any of the Ripper victims public," Jack intersected.

"Maybe he is the Ripper, I don't know. But if he is a plagiarist, the real Chesapeake Ripper is going to make sure everybody knows it."

And wasn't that an interesting thought? Will got goosebumps and turned away from the others.

He went home, checked his phone and took the dogs out, trying to forget. He checked his phone again before he went to bed. There were no messages, no calls. It was good, he told himself. He slept feverish and woke up to a call from Jack.

"I know when I'm awake," Jack later insisted as they were talking about Miriam Lass' call from the grave. Will wasn't sure he could say the same. Maybe the kiss had been a dream. It would explain why Hannibal didn't try to contact him.

He stared at his phone after class, thinking about calling Hannibal himself when Alana and Jack came in. They wanted to push the Ripper into showing himself. Will couldn't help but look down at his phone again. Hannibal's contact was still opened. Will took his finger away

from the call button and turned his phone off.

Freddie was quick. She did the interview and published it within 24 hours. Will thought about asking Hannibal how he liked it. Had there been an appointment on that day, he might have done it. Instead he waited, unsure who he was rooting for, unsure what he wanted to be true.

Jack summoned them to his house on the day of Will's next appointment. He chickened out and cancelled via text message to Hannibal. He wasn't ready to deal with hearing Hannibal's voice. As Will watched Beverly pick a blond hair from Jacks pillows, Will felt his phone vibrate. He checked it after they left, Hannibal had returned his text. The reply was understanding and polite as ever and also infuriatingly meaningless. He obviously wasn't the most important thing on Hannibal's mind right now. He wished he could say the same.

An arm of an FBI trainee later, Will stood outside of the observatory. He knew Jack would make him look into the Ripper. He wasn't opposed to the idea. He wanted to dig deeper. But the situation was an unnecessary and stupid risk.

At first, Will didn't get why the Ripper had walked into the limelight like this and then Will realized that there would be nothing else for Jack now, and Jack would make sure there would be nothing else for Will but the Ripper. The Ripper would be the most important thing on Will's mind.

Sorbet by crystalusagi

Chapter by crystalusagi

“Am I your psychiatrist, or are we simply having conversations?” Hannibal asks. They have glasses in their hands, and Will takes a sip, tart flavor bursting on his tongue.

“‘*Yes* ,’ I think, is the answer to that.” The lines of their relationships are blurred and broken in the sand, and Hannibal must know this as well as Will does.

Hannibal is pleased with his non-answer, in any case. “Having a glass of wine before seeing a patient, I assure you, is very conventional. Especially for evening appointments.”

“Conventional. Is that what this is?” He meant it as an off-handed joke, but the question hangs between them, weighed down by everything they’ve left unsaid.

“What else would you like it to be, Will?” Hannibal shifts closer. He swirls the wine in his glass but does not partake. His smile simultaneously challenges and caresses.

“Are you going to kiss me again?” asks Will, even as he is unable to determine whether it was he or Hannibal who initiated the first kiss. The only thing he can recall about that moment is the scent of Hannibal’s expensive aftershave and his hot breath against Will’s neck as he inhaled deep.

Hannibal blinks once, head tilted a fraction. “Again?” Something prickles in the back of Will’s mind, but before he can examine it, Hannibal is taking his glass from him. Hannibal draws even closer, the warmth of his breath mingling with Will’s as he speaks. “Would you welcome my kiss, Will?”

No response, just the slight parting of his lips. His chin lifts, the better to fall into Hannibal’s warm amber eyes. This time, when the kiss comes, it’s not a light press, there and then gone again. It’s molten liquid in his veins, a rush of heat as Hannibal’s mouth plunders his, slow and sweet.

When Hannibal pulls back, Will almost reaches out to grab his arm. The need to feel that burning in his blood again nearly overwhelms him. Somehow, he refrains.

“Shall we commence with our session?” Hannibal asks, perfectly reserved, the sheen on his lips the only reminder they kissed at all. “I read the Freddy Lounds article. Chesapeake Ripper has struck again.”

Right, Will thinks, nearly whiplashed. *Back to the game we play.*

But that’s just fine. At least Will knows the rules to this game.

Or he *thinks* he does.

***

They're strictly business after that, but Hannibal's gaze lingers on him when they're in the same room. Will knows he lingers right back, and he's certain Hannibal notices. They circle round each other as Hannibal examines the crime scene photos of the supposed Chesapeake Ripper, his face studious and polite.

"I can see why you have bad dreams."

Will expected to see more than cool interest from Hannibal, but by now he knows Hannibal only ever gives in to expectations when he chooses. "What do you see, Doctor?"

The pendulum swings as Hannibal speaks. Will weaves himself in and out of the conversation, watching it as it arcs back and forth. It only stops when Hannibal's hand closes around his wrist. Will wants to yank away. The glitter in Hannibal's eyes, so very earnest now--and *warm* --makes him wary.

"What do *you* see, Will?"

"I…" *I don't want to see anything. I don't want our game to end yet.*

Before he has to answer, Jack bursts into the room.

"Will! There you are."

***

Much later, Will idles in bed and thinks about the many facets of Hannibal: the gourmand, who delights in sharing his table with his friends; the compassionate doctor, possessing the ability to reach into a man's heart and stop its bleeding; the observant analyst, trying to puzzle out the complexities of another's psyche.

And beneath it all lies the horned beast, savage and cunning, inhabiting Will's nightmares.

So why is it that Will finds himself wanting to encounter that dark, lurking thing in the labyrinths of his mind as he drifts slowly toward slumber?

I am in so much trouble.

Fromage by vix_spes

Chapter by vix_spes

Will couldn't help but wonder what Hannibal's reaction was going to be when he walked through the door of Hannibal's office. There was no doubt that Budge would have bragged about killing two police officers, but Will wasn't sure if he would have been more specific than that.

They had both been playing games during this case, both he and Hannibal.

Will had had no compunction about driving straight to Hannibal's home to inform him that he and Alana had just kissed. He knew exactly what he was doing, that he was provoking the Chesapeake Ripper, but why did Hannibal get to have all the fun? Was there something that said Hannibal could manipulate Will but not vice versa? To the untrained eye, Hannibal showed no reaction to Will's words, but this was Will and he could see that Hannibal's normally perfect straight-backed posture was a little *too* stiff, and his tone, whilst perfectly amiable, had a brusque edge to it. Even so, Will couldn't help but have one more dig; just to see what happened.

“She's very kissable.”

Of course, Hannibal had responded with his own manipulations, disguised as concern for one of his patients. It wasn't difficult to work out that the colleague Hannibal spoke of was not one of Dr Lecter’s medical colleagues, but more likely one of the Ripper's. Maybe Will wasn't the only person that Hannibal was playing games with. When Hannibal started talking about patient confidentiality, Will fought the urge to scoff; Hannibal was doing this for his own purposes, not for any concern for his patient or future victims. When Hannibal mentioned the owner of a string shop in Baltimore, Will knew exactly who Hannibal was talking of; the man was already on their radar.

“Perhaps you should interview him.”

Perhaps Will would request that pleasure, just to see exactly what game Hannibal was playing.

~*~

For all of the games, Will was still surprised by the wealth of emotion that was visible on Hannibal's face. It wasn't there for much more than a second, but it was there.

“I was worried you were dead.”

And he was, he really was glad that Will was alive. T there was total sincerity in his voice. It was interesting. It suggested that Hannibal was fallible, that he'd taken a risk. That, for all of his manipulations and plans, he hadn't been certain that Will would survive the encounter

with Tobias Budge. And then Jack started talking and Will blocked him out as he tried to parse together what had happened.

He was very tempted to let the pendulum swing but, in the end, he didn't. Instead, he listened to the conversation between Hannibal and Jack, interjecting every now and then. Hannibal's story - a very well-constructed story - would convince most people, maybe even convince Jack, but Will wasn't most people. Hannibal was good enough to have killed both his patient and Tobias Budge with no more than the injuries he currently bore. He was certainly a good actor. Knowing that Jack would be suspicious if he didn't do anything, Will started asking questions, continually resisting the urge to smile.

This was fun.

Finally, with Jack out of the way, Will moved closer to Hannibal, taking a seat on the desk. It was perhaps a testament to how off-kilter Hannibal was that he didn't comment upon it, merely looked up at Will with a soft look on his face. Hannibal was still up to something, there was something else that he was keeping from Will, something that concerned Will himself; maybe to do with Will seeing ghosts and hearing strange noises, the headaches, the sleepwalking and the losing time that Will couldn't account for. He didn't have enough evidence to confront or accuse Hannibal though. Besides, mystery illnesses and manipulations aside, he was becoming almost fond of Hannibal. He looked down at the man, taking in the cuts on his face, the stab wound to his thigh and the way that Hannibal's normally perfectly slicked back hair flopped in his face.

“I feel like I've dragged you into my world.” At Will's words, Hannibal looked up at him and, more than anything, Will wanted to kiss him. He didn't want to do so, however, with the number of techs in the vicinity as well as the possibility that Jack was still hovering. Instead, he made do with resting his hand on the desk, smiling as Hannibal's came to lay alongside it, not quite touching but close enough that Will could sense it.

“I got here on my own, but I appreciate the company.”

Before Will could hold eye contact for too long - something miraculous in and of itself - Hannibal looked away, although he left his hand where it was and Will cursed mentally. Damn it, why did the bastard have to be such a charming serial killer? Why did Will not have a better taste in potential love interests?

Maybe he could wait just a little bit longer to try and figure out what was going on.

Trou Normand by FannibalToast

Chapter by FannibalToast

Will's undoing began with a kiss. Not just a kiss of lips and longing, but one of blood. As he stood beneath the totem of bodies, a droplet fell from the remains of Joel Summers to caress his cheek, and he found himself leaning into it as eagerly as he had pressed into Hannibal's embrace.

He was both himself and not himself as he drew ever closer to Hannibal. But he knew now that, even while straining to keep his eyes open, he had been blind.

As Will suspected, he was not the only one with whom Hannibal was playing games. Will surfaced from his blackout, sputtering and afraid, grasping for Hannibal's hand, only to find it slick with more blood.

Nick Boyle's blood, coaxing the pendulum of Will's mind with a persistence he could no longer ignore. It followed him up from a dream, forcing the scales from his eyes. He knew Hannibal's design; he hadn't wanted to know Abigail's part in it.

Hannibal was playing games with her, too. Will didn't know which was worse: that Hannibal had kept this part of Abigail from him, or that there was a fog in his mind, perhaps more dense than he wanted to admit, that kept him from seeing it.

He burst into the office without knocking. Anger—and a surprising, if foolish, knot of heartache—made him bold. "Abigail Hobbs killed Nick Boyle."

Hannibal neither flinched nor recoiled. He merely blinked. "Yes. I know."

Will felt himself wince under the weight of Hannibal's admission. Whatever this game was they were playing, he had assumed — hoped — Abigail was off limits. She was *their* charge, *theirs* to protect. Hannibal fractured the whole of them and set Abigail on a shelf where Will couldn't reach.

Will twisted his face toward the floor, knowing his emotions were embroidered there all too clearly. He couldn't let Hannibal read them, not now. "Tell me why you know."

"I helped her dispose of the body." Said so easily. So calmly.

"Evidently, not well enough."

They held each other in a brimming silence. Hannibal was finally the one to break it. "Have you told Jack Crawford?"

"No."

"Why not?"

Because if I tell him about this, I need to tell him about other connections I've made. Because telling him about Abigail is a thread that unravels and scatters us all, and I can't have you taken from me.

But Hannibal was reckless, selfish, with Abigail, and for this, Will withheld.

"Because I was hoping it wasn't true."

Hannibal's fingers grazed the scalpel on his desk, drawing Will's attention to it before pushing it away and rising to his feet. A threat?

An acknowledgement. *I've hurt you.* "Now you know the truth."

Will's laugh was rueful, dry. "Do I?" It was an earnest question, a moment of rigid candor slicing through the undulations of their half-honesties.

How far does this go? How many more deceptions are waiting for me?

Hannibal's response felt honest enough: he wanted to protect Abigail. He wanted to save her from the blame that follows those with a close proximity to death — the ones who, while not innocent, find themselves fumbling in a darkness not entirely of their own making. Wasn't that the space Will himself inhabited? Was Hannibal not trying to keep her from the depths now tightening around Will?

"We are her fathers now. We have to serve her better than Garrett Jacob Hobbs."

Fathers. Family. The knot of heartache began to untangle. He could rest. With Hannibal and Abigail, he could belong.

When Hannibal asks if Will is going to tell Jack, if he needs his lawyer, Will feels the venom drain out of him and he shakes his head. There's still an ache in his chest, a red ember of hurt sending up curls of smoke inside him, but the flame is gone. There's something else flickering, between his ribs, down past his belly, into his groin. More than his desire for family. A need to show Hannibal that he isn't the only one in control.

"We can tell no one."

Hannibal approached, slowly, deliberately, bringing his gravity and his heat with him. He clutched Will's shoulder, tight and intimate, eager. "What we're doing here is the right thing." His breath hot against Will's ear, the side of his neck. *Does he mean what we're doing with Abigail, or this performance meant just for the two of us?*

Hannibal's hand fell, mistaking Will's silence for a dismissal. He pushed no further, instead pivoting to turn away. Will's body reacted then, gripping the older man's wrist, pulling him close, turning so they were finally face to face. Will held Hannibal's stare, widened in surprise. Pleased that he'd caught the ever-ready psychiatrist off guard, Will slid his hand up

Hannibal's neck, pushing forward so he could feel the rapid rise and fall of Hannibal's chest against his own. He watched Hannibal's eyes cloud with want, his lips parting expectantly. Will cupped his face, dragging his thumb over Hannibal's hungry mouth.

"In time, this will be the only story any of us cares to tell," Will whispered. He wouldn't kiss him, though he burned with the phantom heat of it. Instead he let go and turned, leaving Hannibal at the window, breath hitched in his chest.

Will forced down the desire thrumming through him as pushed his way out into the cool night air. Hannibal was still hiding something. His forays into truthfulness didn't change that. Though everything inside Will screamed out for Hannibal's attention, for his touch, what Will needed now was stability. Until Hannibal offered him that, until the fog lifted the the blackouts stopped, Will understood that he had to keep his eyes open and clear.

He took a steadying breath, refusing to let his feet lead him back up to the lion's den where the promise of his own undoing waited for him. And despite these games, despite Hannibal's hidden truths, Will couldn't deny the ferocity with which he wanted to be undone.

Buffet Froid by purplesocrates

He wakes up in the machine, the strange clunking, humming noises now finally ceased. Oddly the noise had been a comfort, a distraction allowing his brain to finally be still. Now there is silence. Complete and total silence, almost deafening in its thickness. He gets up off the bed, cold and hard against the open back of the hospital gown. He looks over at the control booth and there is no one, not even a ghost of a shadow of a person, a sense of someone just having a left, a swinging door, something.

Will tries the handle of the door and thankfully it is open, an irrational fear, or perhaps not so, that it had been locked with him inside forgotten, trapped, left. He takes a deep breath and opens the door, he remembers where the lockers are, where he had left his clothes. Making his way barefoot with a draft on his backside to the locker room he notices the continuing absence of anything. The corridor is thick with silence, it hangs heavy on Will's shoulders. He should probably be scared but he is not sure he is capable of that anymore.

He reaches the locker room and finds that door open too. The lights are those that turn on when they sense movement. He is surprised when they turn on as he enters, he does exist then, good to know. He makes his way to the first wall of lockers and finds his, entering the code he used, his father's birthday, he opens the locker and takes out the clothes. Getting dressed in somewhat of a hurry, not bothering to put his coat back on. He makes his way out of the locker room to Doctor Sutcliffe's office.

Blood. On the handle. Of course.

He uses the sleeve of his coat to open the door. He is sure though that this blood will not be Hannibal's. He is sure that whatever he finds on the other side of the door will be all Hannibal's work. This blood is part of the design and Will does not want to disturb the message. He enters and he can smell it already, that tang in the air of the recently deceased he knows it all too well. Like the smell of his own apparently awful cologne.

"Doctor Sutcliffe?" He says to no-one in particular and of course no-one answers. Edging closer he can see it then. Face ripped open, a screaming human void. Of course. He wants to smile.

***

Bev is kind. She is also blind, they all are. Will sits there and watches as they all try to understand something that is only for him, this is written in a language only he can understand and it is not one he is willing to teach.

He has done this. He opened Doctor Sutcliff's face with his own surgeons hands. He did this because his hands are Hannibal's hands, his mind is Hannibal's mind. They are standing at two ends of a very long room staring at each other across a river of blood, it is as abhorrent as it is beautiful. Hannibal is waiting for him to swim to his side. Will is hoping he will drown when he inevitably succumbs to the instinct to jump.

Hannibal just smiles, curious as ever. Just like the cheshire cat, Will is always Alice. Looking in the dark for answers he already knows...

***

So he goes home to the cold comfort of his nightmares. The nightmares written and directed by Hannibal's red right hand. He dreams of great swathes of warm, gushing, thick blood covering every inch of him in a caress. He dreams his own hands are Hannibal's hands. He dreams of heat, he dreams of unspoken but desperate, obvious need. He is haunted by a spectre of his own making, of Hannibal's making. The spectre bares Hannibal's face, it speaks in Hannibal's voice but it's thoughts; they are his own.

When he wakes he assumes he is still asleep. Then he realises he is cold. He realises his skin is damp and cloying. It makes him feel unhinged. He feels it then. He is not alone with just Hannibal in his head scratching away at the inside of his skull. Someone else is here, someone else who has a similar scratching in her mind. He can almost hear it.

She is under the bed. His mirror image, the physical manifestation of his psychosis and terror. Right there staring at him. He hears his voice, calm and convincing. She reaches out to him, so fragile like a bird.

"Am I alive?" Her voice a whisper, a plea, a question. His answer is a touch, a meeting of her eyes, a reflection of the hope that maybe, just maybe this really is all just a bad dream.

Roti by Hannibalsimago

Chapter by Hannibalsimago

Chapter Summary

A Season 1 Remix by thirteen authors from five countries across eight time zones.

For Hannibal Cre-ate-ive #ForBothOfUs 2018

Chapter Notes

I wish to thank @Fannibaltoast, @makeshiftDaisy, @LoveHonorCookie, @andrandiriel, @purplesocrates, @punchedbymarksmith, @electrarhodes for all the advice, support and encouragement during this project. Everyone was terrific and incredibly inspirational. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this wonderful challenge.

Through it all, he knows who he is.

He may be confused as to when or where he is but he's still Will Graham and that counts for something. A very big something especially when he finds himself waiting for the tsunami to crash over him. He's familiar with water, with tides and currents. He waits and lets the water roll over and through him.

A few days later, it's evening after a hellish day processing Gideon's escape and murder of three officers, on top of an argumentative interaction with Alana and Chilton followed by listening to Jack brief the agents although the latter sounds like a clarion call.

Will takes comfort in the silence of Hannibal's office as he's asked, "What did you see?"

"A thicket of antlers. All I heard was my heart dim but fast, like footsteps fleeing into silence." Will takes a measured breath as Hannibal looks on, concern writ all over his face.

"I don't know how to gauge who I am any more. I don't feel like myself. I feel like I have been gradually becoming different for a while. I just feel like somebody else."

"What do you feel like?" Hannibal sounds eager.

Too eager? The fleeting thought whips through Will's mind, his subconscious perhaps? Who can tell.

"I feel crazy."

"And that is what you fear most."

"I fear not knowing who I am. That's what Abel Gideon's afraid of isn't it. He's like a blind man. Somebody got inside his head and moved all the furniture around. "

"I imagine Abel Gideon would want to find the Chesapeake Ripper to gauge who he is. And who he isn't. Will, you have me as your gauge."

Aren't I lucky? Will's internal voice laughs.

Will's in the morgue with the forensic team, watching them verbally dissect the corpse. He redirects them to notice cause and effect between Gideon and the corpse. He's tired of

drawing patterns for them but knows it's why he's part of the team. He sighs inwardly and tells Jack precisely what location to focus on.

Later sitting in the passenger seat, Will sullenly looks out the window at the rain-swept streets.

Jack glances at his companion. "You look like hell, Will."

"I feel like hell. Actually, I feel fluid. Like I'm... spilling. I must be coming down with something. Hope it's not contagious."

"This. What we do. Can weaken your immune system. If you allow it."

"If I allow it?" *We aren't just talking about the common cold or flu here Jack. A bit obtuse wouldn't you say?* Will's inner voice snarked at Jack.

Jack continued with his pontificating. "Keep this all in perspective. Keep yourself in perspective."

"Myself is in a haze at the moment."

"You seem overwhelmed. You've got to take care of yourself, Will."

"Build up my resistance?" He bit back a bray of laughter at that, afraid that if he started he wouldn't be able to stop.

“Just don’t let yourself go. As much as you can, let the rest of it go. You take too much of this with you.”

You have no idea, do you Jack. Not a clue. None at all, thinks Will.

Will says, “Well whose fault is that, Jack? You knew it was going to be like this. Hard to lead a dance from the sidelines isn’t it? Just wait for the pas de trois.”

Crawford ignores him and clambers out of the car, barking orders and racking a gun as he joins other special agents heading into the observatory. Will watches the deluge of water pour over the car, considers his options and exits to car practically sight unseen.

He spies the Ravenstag and follows where it leads, hopeful it leads back to *him* .

Gideon observes, “You’re a little peaky, Mr. Graham, if I’m allowed to say so. I may be crazy but I believe you’re sick.” He waits for a moment and Garret Jacob Hobbs blinks at the man in the back seat.

“Who is your doctor?” The question hangs in the air.

Let’s find out shall we? I dare say he’s better than yours, he thinks and commands Garret Jacob Hobbs, “Drive.”

“Will, what are you doing here?” asks Hannibal. Will is sure it’s for his companion’s benefit than his.

Why, I’m getting a better look at my gauge, Dr. Lecter, because something’s decidedly of f, *replies the snarky voice in Will’s head.*

Not your prettiest show, Hannibal. Tsk. Tsk, chides his inner voice.

Now, now, you know what they say, If you can't say anything nice...

He would say I was being rude.

Since when has that ever stopped you before?

The inner monologue winds down as Will prattles an excuse, standing at the dining room table.

"I didn't know where else to go. I'm... I'm having a hard time thinking. I feel like I'm losing my mind. I don't know what's real." He waves his gun at Garret Jacob Hobbs seated at the head of the table, silently observing.

"It's 7:27 PM. You're in Baltimore, Maryland. Your name is Will Graham," Hannibal ticks off the statements in a list.

"I don't care who I am! Tell me…if he's real."

"Who do you see, Will?"

"Garret Jacob Hobbs. Who do *you* see?"

Hannibal replies calmly, "I don't see anyone."

Will is frustrated, annoyed, a bit afraid, terrified of madness.

He insists, "He's. Right. There," as he points to the head of the table.

Hannibal says softly, “There’s no one there, Will.”

“You’re lying.”

“We’re alone. You came here alone. Do you remember coming here?”

“Please don’t lie to me.” Will wails in frustration. *You know I hate outright lying. Lies of omission are easier to bear.*

“Garret Jacob Hobbs is dead. You killed him. You watched him die.”

Will shakes his head determined to hold on to what he knows even as his fingers push through the skin on his face which almost drips onto the floor.

I told Jack I was fluid, as he bites back a bray of laughter.

“What’s happening to me?”

“You’re having an episode. I want you to hand me your gun.”

Will shakes his head through confusion, shudders, goes still.

Hannibal asks concerned, “Will?” and checks his pupils along with his forehead, cradling it in his hands. *I should tell him now but he won’t remember.* Hannibal thinks. His mind drifts as he runs his fingers along stubble, seemingly unconcerned but striving to retain composure. He’s enjoying this far too much and allows himself more solicitous touches under the guise of clinical detachment. He debated whether to kill Abel Gideon in that moment just for being a witness to such intimacy and struggled to maintain control over himself and what he wanted. *So close! Patience. Don’t overplay your hand. Step carefully, his mind cautioned.*

“He’s had a mild seizure.”

“That doesn’t seem to bother you,” observes Gideon.

“I said it was mild,” as he removes the gun from Will’s hand and directs his next question to the man seated at his table.

“Are you the man who claimed to be the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“Why do you say claimed?”

“Because you’re not. You know you’re not and you don’t know much more about who you are beyond that.”

“A terrible thing to have your identity taken from you.”

“I’m taking it back one piece at a time. You should see the pieces I got out of my psychiatrist.”

“Alana Bloom was one of your psychiatrists, too. Is that right?”

“Yes. Dr. Bloom.”

“I can tell you where to find her.”

Will stares into middle distance and blinks.

“Will... can you hear me?”

Will slowly nods, disoriented.

“Repeat after me. My name is Will Graham.”

“My name is Will Graham.”

“Raise both of your arms.”

Will does as instructed albeit a bit slowly, Hannibal studies them, then gently pushes them back down again. He continues “Although you may not feel like it, I need you to smile.”

Will gives him a truly hideous rictus of a smile but as frightening as it appears, it’s even and symmetrical.

“Not a stroke. You may have had a seizure. Tell me the last thing you remember.”

“I was with Garret Jacob Hobbs.” *As well you know.* Will’s interior voice won’t be silent for long.

“You have a fever. You were hallucinating. You thought he was alive. In the room with you.”

“I saw him.” *He was here.*

“He’s a delusion disguising reality. Don’t let that let you slip away. You killed Garret Jacob Hobbs once. Can find a way to kill him again.”

Hannibal places his car keys on the dining room table.

“Where are you going?”

Hannibal moves toward the door, shrugging on his coat. “I’m worried about Alana Bloom. Abel Gideon is still at large. He mutilated Dr. Chilton. They found him clinging to life. Will…”

“Alana.”

Will stands but Hannibal gently pushes him back down.

“You’re in no state to go anywhere but the hospital. I’ll call Jack Crawford. Tell him where you are.” Hannibal uses the opportunity to get his cell phone, returning and dialing, but Will is already gone. Hannibal hangs up the phone, more content than he’s been in a long time. He is inordinately pleased with himself.

Relevés by andiemerizein

Chapter Notes

> Definitely on the low end of the target word count, but hopefully I did justice to Will's thought process.

Hannibal is in WIll's hospital room, pulling those fancy ceramic containers out of his fancy cooler bag. Whatever he's got smells amazing. Leave it to Hannibal Lecter to make him pretentious chicken soup when he's in the damn hospital with… well, whatever this is. You'd think he was laid up at home with a cold. Maybe a particularly snobby cold. Heh. Hannibal's face projects earnest concern, but his true intent is hidden.

"You made me chicken soup?" Will asks, skeptical, considering the belated and admittedly dramatic gesture.

A delay, as if trying to decide whether to deflect or cover his tracks. "Yes."

Something about this feels familiar. His mind flashes to the breakfast in his motel room, that first time. To his questionable decision to let his mind go down the route it had taken in the shower later that day. And to the realization he'd had about Cassie Boyle, on the stag's head, in the field. And he could be making connections that weren't there in the first place, but with the fever under control, he feels he has a tenuous grasp on something like clarity. Weeks of brain fog had clouded the pathways of his mind, and roots had come crawling up from the foundations of his more recent memories, causing him to stumble between recollections. But if he goes back far enough, well before their first kiss--had they kissed?--he's sure he remembers what happened. For now. And he suspects Hannibal isn't finished with whatever it is he's been doing.

"The nurses tell me you've been wandering, Will." That false concern again. *Hardly like the wandering I've been doing the last several months. Is he trying to get me to question myself?* Will thinks.

"I was awake, heh, and wandering with purpose. And good intentions."

"Visiting that unfortunate young woman." What is he trying to insinuate?

"She's my support group," he counters. The rest of their conversation is a tug of war, Hannibal bringing the conversation to Georgia, Will always pulling it back to himself. Hannibal has always been eager to talk about Will. Will wonders what has changed.

He's standing over Georgia Madchen's immolated body in his bathrobe, pushing an IV pole. Will thinks back to Hannibal words over chicken soup. To his own words. *I don't think she wants to recover,* he'd said. And now she's gone. But, facing two murder charges or not, he doesn't think she did this to herself on purpose.

The pendulum swing is faint, rushed. He feels a flash of something he can't quite identify. He loses it too soon. The pendulum swings again. It's gone. His mind is still on the fritz. But Hannibal's words, so many of them, from their last conversation and from so many before, run over and over through his mind. And he thinks of leaving the MRI and finding Dr. Sutcliffe's body. Dr. Sutcliffe's body, head split open at the jaw, in his desk chair. Without a nurse or tech in sight. Will's fuzzy on the details of that appointment, but someone must have orchestrated it so that no one else would be around. Georgia couldn't have done that.

When Will figured out what Hannibal was, he had been desperate not to be told directly. He'd liked him, against his better judgment. He hadn't wanted to be under an ethical obligation to get him in trouble. Will has been holding onto hope that Hannibal might be wrong about this being more than just a fever. He feels his blood run cold at the realization that Hannibal knows more than he's letting on. Now, he realizes, he's been backed into a corner. He finally wants to tell someone, everyone, what Hannibal is, and he will not be believed if he tries.

Savoureux

Chapter Summary

> Here it is, lovelies! Our Season One remix conclusion! I hope you like how I tied it up. Comments are my lifeblood, so let me know what you think. :D

When he wakes up, sweat drenched and caked in mud, he doesn't think anything of it at first.

The abnormal has become normal. Will can't grasp at the meaning of stasis anymore. Time and space are elusive concepts floating away like dust particles swirling in the atmosphere, small and undetectable, too insubstantial to grasp in one's fist. All metrics for assigning meaning to them have slid away, have *been* sliding for so long now, melting away like Georgia's skin must have dissolved from her bones in that oxygen-rich cage, the atmosphere that was supposed to nurture her wielded as a weapon, becoming her incendiary tomb.

Before she died, Georgia's skin hadn't yet shrunk to fit her form, parts of it still tenuously clinging to her bones like it couldn't find the seam. Her skin had been an ill-fitting sweater for so long it had forgotten how to fuse to her body, no longer remembering where it belonged. Will knows the feeling.

When he swallows the pills, he still doesn't think about it, the gesture automatic, the bottle nearly an extension of his own limbs at this point. As frequently as he reaches for it, the plastic might as well be soldered to his skin.

A dizzying bout of nausea overwhelms him, and he vomits into the sink. Will shakes when he sees the results, his night-sweats giving way to the colder, deeper perspiration of horrific despair, a marrow-deep uncertainty that is too much to process. He looks down at the ear, slimy and red, the edge looking ragged, as though it was severed with a harsh blade, and can't believe what he's seeing.

Will doesn't remember.

Will doesn't remember anything that matters.

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He calls Hannibal. He calls him because, much like his aspirin habit, calling Hannibal has become second nature. He's uncertain whether or not it is a reflex he should ignore right now, all things considered, but he's also not certain there's a better option. Or another option at all.

“When was the last time you saw Abigail?”

The sharpness in Hannibal’s voice, his stern eyes, makes Will question himself even more. This isn’t right. Hannibal is supposed to be his steady ballast in the storm. He is supposed to steer him to a place where everything is clear.

But he hasn’t done that for some time now… has he?

Will thinks back to Hannibal’s secrets about Abigail, the muddiness of his design where she was concerned, and it adds a wrench into the gears of his mind that he can’t parse right now. The clock within him is already chugging at a disorienting pace, the hands spinning around and around until their whirring arms threaten to break off from their stations.

“I hallucinated killing her, but I know it wasn’t real.”

Will expects an affectionate hand, a warm gaze, anything that will prove that what has been brewing between the two of them is real. He wants Hannibal to say he doesn’t believe Will did this. He looks for a cue to divine Hannibal’s motives, but he finds none.

“We have to call Jack Crawford.”

Whatever Will expects, he doesn’t expect to hear that.

***

Jack is perfunctory and detached when he tells Will he will be moved to a medical ward. It’s maddening. It makes Will feel even more like a perp, a disgusting thing to be dealt with, the assembly line nature of the justice system rendering his flesh and blood humanity into a paper trail task to be completed.

It’s not that he doesn’t expect it. It’s not even that he blames Jack. Jack is just doing his job, but it isn’t what Will wants to hear right now.

The secret of the encephalitis barely registers. It almost seems superfluous, a small bullet point in a long list of Hannibal’s deceptions. Will has many more vital things to consider. Mostly he’s just grateful for a name to be given to the fever, the exacerbating disorientation. Maybe he can clasp onto clarity and keep it for good this time.

“We found your fishing lures.”

“No no no no.” Jack doesn’t know why Will is protesting. He only knows part of it.

Hannibal .

Will lets the pendulum swing. He encourages it, ushers it in with boundless enthusiasm and the ravenous appetite of a starving canine descending upon a steak. He wants to know. Now,

more than ever, he wants to know. His survival depends on it.

Hannibal, what have you done?

He sees the Wendigo, towering and expressionless, shellacked black skin stretched tight over sharp ribs, and the face is Hannibal's. He doesn't really need to do this. He already knows, but he forces himself to see it in the harshest of unfiltered light.

Hannibal bent over Will's tying gear. Hannibal weaving an airtight scheme under the guise of being a good friend. He didn't even have to come up with a plan. Will gave it to him.

Gift-wrapped.

"Thank you for feeding my dogs."

Will hears the memory of his own voice, and his stomach turns.

He opens his eyes and knows he can't tell Jack. It would, at best, make him look unhinged and desperate to point in a hapless direction, which, he supposes, is what Hannibal wants.

So he does what Hannibal would do. He doesn't coerce. He isn't direct. He is persuasive. He is cryptic. He is all hints and riddles.

"There's something you should be afraid of though."

"Yeah, what's that?"

"Whoever's doing this to me. They'll be close to you. Could be someone here. Working with you."

"So that's it? It's a setup?"

"They know the cases. They know forensics. They know that I'm unstable." Will can't help but laugh at that. It's perfect. He can't believe how perfect it is. He has the strangest urge to congratulate Hannibal on a job well done, the clever bastard.

***

"Hello, Will. How are you feeling?"

Will wants to let out a bitter laugh at the mundanity of the question, the fake concern.

Still wearing the mask after all this time. Let it never be said that you are not painstaking in your efforts, Hannibal.

He remains in his position among Hannibal's stacks of books and doesn't look at him. He isn't sure what he'll do if he looks into those amber eyes. There is still some lingering sense

of affection laced with the acerbic scent of betrayal. Will refuses to believe Hannibal's desire wasn't genuine to some degree. It was. It was just twisted into a strange shape. Every human emotion is twisted into a strange shape when filtered through the lens of Hannibal's intricate chess game of a mind.

"Self aware," Will mysteriously says. Two can play this game.

"Alana is frightened for your safety, Will."

"I'm frightened for my safety too. Is this how you love, Dr. Lecter? How very Old Testament of you."

"Love? Is that how you see us? You do excel in the art of the surprise, dear Will." In his periphery, Will can see that curious feline tilt of Hannibal's head. He can hear the subtle shift in his tone. He's almost ecstatic, the bastard. Others wouldn't notice it, but Will does. Will is noticing all sorts of things now, both past and present.

"Is that how *you* see us?"

"I see you as a very troubled man. A man in need of a friend. A friend's guidance."

"You're not my friend, Hannibal. Apparently, you've never been."

"I will always be your friend, Will."

Will doesn't even touch that, just bulldozes through it, one piece of debris in a giant pile of wreckage surrounding them both.

"I would have believed if it was just Abigail, you know. If you wanted me to mistrust my own identity, you shouldn't have gone this far. Or is that what you wanted? What *did* you want, Hannibal? And tell me how Abigail deserved to be a pawn in all of this?" Will hears his own voice turn acrid. He didn't know he even had the energy for that. Will is tired in more ways than he can count.

"You seem to be laboring under the assumption that I am involved somehow in the hand fate has dealt you. What is it you think I - "

"Cut the fucking bullshit, Hannibal. No more metaphors. No more dancing. Tell me."

"Will, you are very sick. You are not seeing clearly. I assure you I am only here to - "

"Stop lying to me! I didn't do this! Any of this! You did. I *know* who you are, Hannibal!"

"You are not aware of much right now, Will. Not even who you are."

Will isn't sure that he expected truth in this conversation. Hannibal is the most careful of men, and the risk of transparency is too great. Still, Will is a man with nothing left to lose. He has to try.

"Take me to Minnesota. I want to see where Abigail died."

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"You be my dad. You be my mom, and you be the man on the phone."

Will looks at him and thinks about how many strings Hannibal has been pulling since the very beginning. He wonders how many threads he has yet to uncover.

He looks at the blood and any burgeoning affection he had for Hannibal, any vestiges of need and want that were lingering are gone for now because he can't abide by this. Abigail was supposed to have a better life. She wasn't supposed to shift from being one serial killer's puppet to another's, her life defined by sinister machinations that have nothing to do with her.

"You're alone because you are unique." Hannibal circles him, a blood-lusting shark. His teeth are beginning to show. The veneer is slipping ever so slightly.

"I'm as alone as you are."

"If you followed the urges you kept down for so long, cultivated them as the inspirations they are, you would have become someone other than yourself." Hannibal's breath hitches, his excitement bleeding through, and Will doesn't know what to do with that. It reminds him of what Hannibal said, that hopeful glint that now seems so long ago.

I hope one day to be able to come to you, as well.

Will had thought he knew what Hannibal meant, that he wanted Will to know who he really was, but then why was he doing this to him? Was this a demented test? Will rubs his sweaty forehead. His brain is bursting with heat, cluttered with detritus, and so very confused. He can't make sense of any of this. There is rage and betrayal and profound sadness, and it is altogether overwhelming.

"You killed her. You discarded her life in the name of whatever sick game we've been playing. Collateral damage." Will raises the gun with shaking, feverish hands. He can't read Hannibal's expression.

"Are you a killer, Will?"

"Isn't this what you wanted, Hannibal? For me to prove my worth? To prove I was ready to receive your secret? To join you? What's the matter? Not happy with how your pet project turned out? That's the trouble with livestock, Hannibal. Sometimes they rebel against their captors."

"I am not your captor, Will. I am the only one who is trying to free you."

"This doesn't feel like freedom to me."

"Will, easy," Jack's voice interrupts.

Will hears the shot before he feels it, his body falling backward like a felled tree, heavy lumber hitting the forest floor.

***

Will hears his footsteps, the precise click of his Italian leather shoes. He knew he would come. Will is like catnip to Hannibal. This is far from over. Hannibal certainly doesn't want it to be. That's what Will is banking on.

He thought he knew the rules of the game. He was wrong, but now all cards are on the table. Will might be caged, but he feels a faint ray of hope glinting off the metal bars surrounding him. Will isn't sure this is the freedom Hannibal intended for him, but it's the one he's received all the same. He couldn't see from his vantage point before. Maybe now he has a fighting chance.

"Hello, Will."

"Hello, Dr. Lecter."

Hannibal smiles, and even though his lips are sealed, it's all teeth.

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